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Problems in Visualizing and Validating History: A Discourse on

Rani by Jaishree Misra

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Abstract

Our Indian education system is such that we are taught a lot about history, long fought battles, wars, invaders and kings and rulers who died when and how. In broader sense, history does not only about dates and battles, it associates and intersperses our past and present with social, cultural, religious and traditional discourses. Our history spanning over thousand years guide our present and future. Indian writers have given their thoughts flying colors making our history unbelievably great. They get inspired from our enormously vast past incidents and express them according to their views and idea. There is no particular parameter which may define the history as fiction. Indian mythological epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata have been described and redefined in numerous different ways. India and Indian people have suffered a lot when British army ruled us for more than 200 years. There were many brave patriots who fought for our independence. One

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of such fighters is Rani Lakshmi Bai. This paper explores her life validating history through the novel, Rani. This novel is written by Jaishree Misra. Indian writers have explored the life and bravery of this amazingly courageous woman who redefined the womanhood and valor in her own way making a wave for the revolutionary fight for independence.

Keywords: Invaders, fight for independence, Rani Lakshmi Bai, valor and womanhood.

It's a fictionalized biography of Rani Lakshmi Bai who is also known as Manikarnika. She was the queen of Jhansi, a state situated in the region of Bundelkhand of the central part of India.

This struggle and fight of Rani is also known as one of the first rebellious revolt against the English rule. The novel begins with a 13-year-old young lady living with her father in Varanasi. Her father asks her to marry the king of Peshwa, Gangadhar Rao. He is a widower and elder a few years than Rani. He does not have a son who can sit on the throne and look after the state after the death of Peshwa Ji Maharaj. So he remarries Rani Lakshmi Bai. Gangadhar Rao teaches her and involves her in the state affairs to make her acquainted on how to rule the state. Nevertheless, life was not easy for her being a queen of the state. English rulers were making plans to acquire the state. In between all the mess, Gangadhar dies even to make her situation worse. Ms. Misra explores the dilemma and struggle of Rani digging different incidents. Lord Dalhousie rejects the state proposal which recognizes Damodar Rao, an adopted child, as the successor of Gangadhar. This was the main reason behind taking the rule of state in her hands despite knowing the fact that

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innumerable hindrances would have been created by the English rulers who already were finding ways to take over the reign.

Misra has made an in-depth research while writing the novel. During the course of this exploration, she came across different doctrines of incidences happened in Rani Lakshmi Bai's Life. These novels and doctrines accept the fact that Rani was a brave warrior who made many sacrifices before finally sacrificing her life in a battle, but some theories accuse her of a heinous crime killing children and women of British rulers at Jokaan Bagh. Though Misra states that her work is a fiction based on incidents happened in her life, but this work makes readers believe that there is some logic behind it and this work seems to be a real work which explores the incidences happened.

Professor Shubhra Tripathi states in her words in IJELLH research paper that "An author attempting to fictionalize history is confronted with a Herculean task. He is inspired enough by some historical person or event, and has already formed a perception of it before he uses it as the subject of his creativity. He then visualizes this perspective in a manner which may or may not conform to that of the historian. At the same time he also has to validate his vision either with information from authentic historical documents or texts, or from his own imaginative perception of the past. In the process the author trudges a very narrow and intriguing path between history and fiction. History is perception of past factually, and historical fiction is rendering these facts imaginatively. Since there is an inherent dichotomy between the two - history and fiction, there is an inherent dialectical tension in historical fiction too. The historical

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novelist is required to remain on an even keel. But in practice we find that he often strays into the realms of pure history or pure fiction. With a view to validate his fiction he holds on to history and to visualize history he resorts to imagination. He thus oscillates between the two, history and imagination or facts and fiction. In conceiving history creatively, he thus encounters problems, in terms of validating his visualization due to the inherent dialectics of historical fiction.”

It takes a high risk taking incidences of the past and using your own imagination twisting some parts of the facts and make your own story. Researchers make an extensive research when they write a fictional story especially taking a historical figure because if your theory goes wrong you could be accused of making history and war heors tainted. Readers may be preoccupied with the perceived notions and feeds and deviating a history can make you a rebellious writer. Like the massacre incident, some accuse Rani of that incidence and never take her as a hero of the history but some intellectuals reject this incident stating that British rulers at that time have modified the incidence and tried to defame the Rani who was their main hindrance in taking over the reign of Jhansi.

Conclusion: It takes a lot of courage when a writer starts his/her work fictionalizing the incidences happened in the lives of our heroes of the past. No one actually knows the real incidences of the history. It is just made up by the historians, writers, poets and intellectuals. The only difference is some are made to believe as true as the real incidence and some are being taken as a fiction work. Sometimes writers’ emotions move their writing and the work gets

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distracted from its focus. This contradictory stories and changed behavior of real heroes can be found in novels to novels and writers to writers. Like the Misra is preoccupied with the thought of womanhood and is carried away by the emotions of her belief. She tried to justify the decisions taken and actions done by the Rani deviating the incidences and making them fictional. Sometimes, writings imagination is so convincing that readers starts believing in those fictional characters and imagined stories and over the course of time they are taken as real heroics. Like in the case of Queen Padmavati. Some researchers believe that Padmavati does not exist in reality and it is an imagination of a poet whereas some are of belief especially in Rajasthan social and historic culture that they worship the bravery of Rani Padmavati.

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